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Camp Depression: an Era of Hope and Opportunity at the University of North Dakota

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Camp Depression

AN ERA OF HOPE & OPPORTUNITY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA





Camp Depression

An Era of Hope & Opportunity
at the University of North Dakota

*...A string of cabooses
Remnants of vanished trains, crouch in a square
Like the pioneers' covered wagons, a tight perimeter
Against the Comanche winter...*

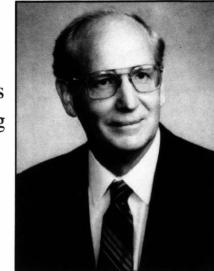
**From *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*,
by North Dakota Poet
Tom McGrath, '39, (HON)'81**

*Specially printed for the CAMP DEPRESSION
REUNION held May 26, 1994 at the University of
North Dakota. This book is dedicated to all those
UND students who lived and learned at the
unique community of Camp Depression during
the 1930s and 1940s.*

Published by the University of North Dakota Alumni Association, May 1994. All rights reserved. Reprints may be made with the consent of the UND Alumni Association, Box 8157, Grand Forks, ND 58202. Earl S. Strinden, executive vice president; compiled and edited by Jacqueline D. Flaten.

FOREWORD

This book is dedicated to those stalwart, independent individuals who were determined to earn their educations at the University of North Dakota during the hard years of the Great Depression. As residents of a historic community, the 'Camp Depression boys' and their families made sacrifices so they could attend an institution of higher learning.



Earl S. Strinden
Executive Vice President
UND Alumni Association

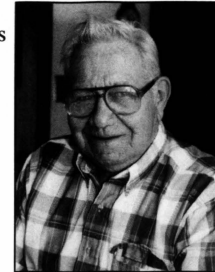
Many earned degrees and many went to war. When called to service, some gave their lives to this great country of ours... others went on to forge successful careers and 'give back' to their families and society. We are truly fortunate to have these written memories, which are from a unique time in UND's history. The Alumni Association is grateful to the Camp Depression reunion committee members, Elmer Lian, '40, and Verl Clark, '41, '52, both of Grand Forks, and Vernon Gardner, '38, Falls Church, Va., who helped organize this event and also provided us with valuable information about this unique era.

The story of Camp Depression, and the perseverance of the men who lived there, will be an inspiration to countless generations of students who will someday walk the campus paths at the University of North Dakota.

Earl S. Strinden
Executive Vice President
University of North Dakota Alumni Association

IN TRIBUTE

This collection of letters, interviews and research is a tribute to the 'Boys of Camp Depression.' They were born and raised and forged in the Great Prairie Depression era; they were molded by the University experience, and tempered by Camp life.



Elmer Lian, '40
Grand Forks

The students of this era probably carried a heavier burden than any other college class. They, more than any other group of men, gave in many cases their 'last full measure of devotion' to the freedom of our country. No other group of men has ever flown the American flag higher in the defense of liberty, justice and our Country.

As the old Camp Depression alumni depart, it should be noted that they played their part in the social, economic, political, educational and military life of our country. They became judges, political figures, teachers, lawyers, doctors and winners of numerous military decorations.

All of us remember the students hurrying to class from the boxcars to the large, beautiful University classroom buildings. I hope we remember our great commission to our Country, to our family and our church, to our friends and to our great School.

*Elmer Lian, UND 1940
Grand Forks, North Dakota
Camp Depression Reunion Co-Host*

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

University Station
Grand Forks, N.Dak.
September 14, 1933

Friends of the University:

We are endeavoring to work out a plan to take care of twenty or twenty-five boys who are unable to attend the University unless they can secure free quarters and some additional work to take care of their meals.

The plan we have in mind is to secure six cabooses from the Great Northern which they are putting out of service and set them up for living quarters. They will be located near the power plant and equipped with steam heat and will be fairly comfortable living quarters. We have no funds to draw on to furnish these cabooses and we are wondering whether some of the friends of the University might not be interested in this project to the extent of donating furniture that they no longer need.

We need bureaus, commodes or any similar pieces of furniture in which the boys may keep their clothes. We can also use some wash basins, mirrors, tables, book racks or book cases, shelving, etc. Discarded electric table lamps could also be used to good advantage.

If you have any furniture answering this description for which you have no further use, it would assist us very materially if you would donate it for the good of the cause. Just give us a ring and we will send the University truck for it.

Very truly yours,

J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager

jww.lw



...Camp Depression...

Nestled in prairie woods on the south edge of the campus from 1933 to 1944 stood Camp Depression, a unique and innovative part of University of North Dakota history. The Camp was located near the railroad tracks between the power house and the old Winter Sports building ("the Barn") and south of Babcock Hall. To the east of campus — two miles away — was the city of Grand Forks. Today, the area where Camp Depression existed is now part of the campus parking facilities.

The Depression era of the 1930s and 1940s affected all United States citizens and institutions in one way or another. Hard times, always woven into the fabric of North Dakota circumstances, settled in for an extended period during the Great Depression. Although the poor economy was felt nationwide, North Dakota in particular was hit harder and earlier, starting in 1920

with the devastating decline in wheat prices.

The people of North Dakota, the majority of them hardy immigrants or immigrants' offspring, knew that now, more than ever, their children needed to secure good educations. These students came to UND from all across the state. Camp Depression boys' hometowns were dotted across North Dakota's windswept expanse; towns like Karlsruhe, Sanish,

Tioga, Inkster, Monango, Wildrose, Rolla, Noonan, Banks, Fredonia, St. John, Elgin, Donnybrook, Adams, Edmore, Velva, Oberon, Grafton, Crary, Marmarth, Fingal, Sheldon, Litchville, Sawyer and Gardar.

In the fall of 1933, University of North Dakota administration saw a need for economical housing on the campus.

Arrangements were made to buy, with the help of local businessmen, eight caboose cars from the Great Northern Railway for \$20 apiece. Camp Depression allowed financially strapped students to earn college degrees while living economically in a quadrangle of railroad cars.

The residents of Camp Depression, having been raised on North Dakota's farms and in small towns, possessed calloused hands, strong constitutions and firm resolve. They knew they had to work

and work hard to get ahead in life. Their stories of those days are an integral part of UND and North Dakota's historical records.

Walt Styer, '41, Brooklyn Center, Minn., and Mekinock, N.D., native, said everyone in those days had one thing in mind: to survive. "People lost everything and there were virtually no jobs to be had."

"There was, however, pride, faith and hope."

...A social experiment...

Camp Depression officially opened Oct. 21, 1933 with six residence cabooses and two others used for kitchen and bathroom facilities. Later, two other residence cars were added.

The University was unable to fund many loans or scholarships; however, the institution helped

students earn their educations through accepting fee payments in the form of farm produce and by employing students as laborers, janitors and classroom assistants. To pay for the privilege of staying at the Camp, each resident worked four hours a week for the University. Members of Camp Depression also made a little money in day jobs off and on in Grand Forks.

Some particularly industrious students even came out ahead — one student went to school, washed dishes in the evening at an all-night cafe, paid his way through law school and paid up the mortgage on his parents' farm. Another worked, paid his expenses and lived frugally — he left UND with more money than when he came. Still

another young man, too shy to live in such close quarters, purchased a small tract of land and built a little shack in which to live while he attended college.

...Home sweet home...

Fifteen brave souls initially signed up to live in

Camp Depression and more quickly followed suit. Keeping the cars occupied was not a problem for UND.

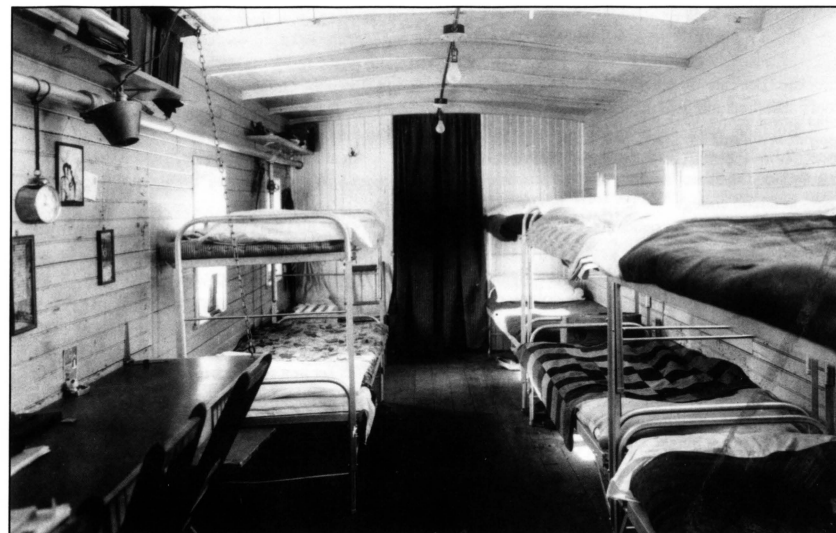
-Walt Styer, '41

Each car was capable of housing eight men, with a little room to spare. Two steam radiators heated the car, and each was equipped with four double bunks, a built-in dresser with eight drawers, and a study

"People lost everything and there were virtually no jobs to be had. There was, however, pride, faith and hope."



Camp Depression was quickly assembled in the fall of 1933, just a month after the idea was conceived by University officials. Local businesses responded to UND's request for monetary help to purchase the cabooses from the Great Northern Railway at \$20 each.



Each residential caboose had beds for eight men. Note the long desk hinged to the wall for studying purposes.

table. On one side was a long table hinged to the wall, and when folded down it was held by two chains. On top of each car was a square cupola, about six by six feet. The cupola held a couple of small benches and a small table. Bookshelves were built in where there was room, and a six-foot rod, suspended in the rear of each car, held the students' clothes. It was noted also that each car held a large majority of boys who smoked, and as the cabooses were not fireproof, a Pyrene fire extinguisher and fire bracket were installed.

Upon being assigned to Camp Depression, each resident was issued a clean pillow case, two sheets and two handtowels. Every Saturday, one sheet, two towels and the pillow case were gathered up by the car's proctor, and sent for cleaning.

The students' University home was affordable and practical, but far from perfect. Powerful prairie winds drove an incessant stream of dust through the cracks — one fellow recalled often waking up to a dust-darkened pillow sporting the outline of his head — and rainstorms sometimes brought water into the caboose. The cars were also quite hot; tar-coated roofs absorbed and held the sun's heat too efficiently.

But there were few complaints. These students were at UND to earn their degrees, not to live in luxury, and the cheap housing made it possible for them to attend college.

Camp Depression residents definitely had a sense of humor.

The April 1938 issue of the *Alumni Review* reported that: "Students living in the colony of remodeled railway cabooses first named Camp Depression are considering changing the name to Camp Recession.

"Believing they can lay claim to the only human business barometer, students have successfully dubbed their abode, Camp Depression, then

Powerful prairie winds drove an incessant stream of dust through the cracks — one fellow recalled often waking up to a dust-darkened pillow sporting the outline of his head — and rainstorms brought water into the caboose.

Camp Recover and Camp Prosperity, in response to the business cycles. The present slump has apparently caused another change in name."

...Nation applauds Camp Depression...

Camp Depression drew national interest and even acclaim for its practical and novel approach to housing young men. Photos were run in all the large dailies, accord-

ing to the University of North Dakota student newspaper, and the *Collegiate Digest*, a national intercollegiate rotogravure service, carried a photo of the residents during a noon meal.

Even the Great Northern Railway, from which the cabooses were purchased, sent a feature story about the camp to all of its station agents.

An article in the May 18, 1934 issue of *The Dakota Student* had this to say about Camp Depression:

"Over 40 UND students live on approximately \$8 per month in what some of the country's largest newspapers say is the most novel and economical boys' dormitory in the country.

"Recently renovated, Camp Depression looks more like a rambling fraternity house than eight cabooses set in a square with a court in the middle. Only boys who cannot afford to live elsewhere are admitted to the camp. A majority of the tenants stated they would be unable to attend the University if it weren't for the small amount of money required to stay there..."

'Open house' was held late in October 1933; each caboose sported a brick and concrete foundation and was reinforced to fend off cold weather. *The Dakota Student* article described them as "well

Over 40 UND students live on approximately \$8 per month in what some of the country's largest newspapers say is the most novel and economical boys' dormitory in the country.

-1934 *Dakota Student*

ventilated and all modern" with a yellow color scheme. A bit of landscaping was added to the area with some bushes, flowers and grass.

The Dakota Student added: "The fact that over a dozen extra students are on the waiting list for next year should be some indication of the popularity of the idea."

The December 1938 issue of the *Alumni Review* reported: "The Office of Education of the Department of the Interior has referred to Camp Depression at the University of North Dakota as "a unique method for an institution of higher learning to provide inexpensive housing for its self-help students."

A book by nationally known author John R. Tunis, "Choosing a College," had this to say about Camp Depression: "...It is the most original solution of the housing problem in American education. The camp consists of seven railroad cabooses fitted to serve as living quarters...one caboose serves as a kitchen. The average cost for food is about \$10 per month, and boys who are good at planning have lived for as little as \$7 per month. Many bring supplies from home, so their cash outlay for food is low. In return for their quarters, every man works four hours weekly for the University."

"The Office of Education of the Department of the Interior has referred to Camp Depression at the University of North Dakota as 'a unique method for an institution of higher learning to provide inexpensive housing for its self-help students.'"

-1938 *Alumni Review*

The *Dacotah* annual of 1937 pictured a group of Camp Depression men with this accompanying text: "In Depression years, it becomes increasingly difficult for young men and women to find jobs to earn part of their expenses in securing a college education.

"The University has helped solve this problem for some men students by establishing Camp Depression, a dormitory built from boxcars. Equipped



Residents of Car 3 at one time, from left: F. Thomas Kiele, now of Palm Springs, Calif.; Roy W. Christianson, killed in action over Germany in WWII; the late Jim Montgomery, Grand Forks; John Goodman, now of Leonard, N.D.; Paul Froemming, now of Mission Viejo, Calif.; Erling Bolstad, now of West Allis, Wis.; and the late Leslie Strand, Carrington, N.D.

with cooking facilities, the dormitory houses 40 men. [Later additions made room for a total of 64 residents.] Macnie Hall, one of the regular men's dormitories, is run on the same plan as Camp Depression, with the students being allowed to work a certain number of hours each week to pay for their rooms. Camp Depression officers are: Gordon Utke, president; Alfred Fjellanger, vice president; and Russell Ellingson, secretary."

...Memories...

Former Camp Depression resident and 1940 UND graduate Elmer Lian of Grand Forks wrote an



Eight boisterous fellows living together in a railroad caboose quickly learned tolerance and how to live efficiently in cramped quarters.

overview of the Great Prairie Depression:

"To step back in time a few years to gain a better perspective as to the economic situation in North Dakota in this era, a few essential elements must be mentioned.

"The Great Prairie Depression struck the Farm Belt on the 15th of July, 1920. On this day, the price of agricultural products including wheat, started a downward plunge from \$3 a bushel to 50 cents a bushel in six months. The price of wheat had been held at a high artificial price in order to keep production high during World War I.

"This singular event broke the economic back of the prairie farmers. Perhaps 50 percent of the farmers went broke and could no longer build homes, purchase machinery, or pay bills... The banks, lumberyards, general stores, hardware and harness shops folded up and people began to live on a marginal economic scale.

"The so-called 'Economic Collapse' of the stock and bond market in October 1929 had little, if any, effect on the prairie. Very few individuals or financial institutions had any stocks or bonds..."

North Dakotans generally used the words "hard times" to describe the economic conditions from 1920 to 1940. Sometimes the cash income from farming crops averaged as little as \$40 per year. People lived on carefully preserved produce from their large gardens, and chickens, cows and pigs gave them eggs, cream and meat. Communities worked together.

For example, in Fairdale, N.D., the residents gathered up vegetables and potatoes and shipped them to western North Dakota. In turn, the towns out west would load a rail car full of lignite coal.

In a transcribed interview with Leslie G. Johnson, '41, who was from Enderlin, N.D., and now Logan, Ohio, Johnson talks about the times:

"The farm years in the 1930s weren't bad, they were disastrous... It rained mud if it ever rained. One year they had drought, the next year they had grasshoppers, and the next year they had nothing."

Lian also wrote: "In 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president. In March 1933 he closed all of the banks and financial institutions, and had each institution evaluated. The financially sound businesses opened and the others closed, to be liquidated or absorbed by other institutions. With President Roosevelt's leadership, hundreds of government welfare projects put people to work."

"During the 1930s and early 1940s, the University had a large National Youth Administration work program. This was one of many government programs to help the poor people. The University NYA was administered by Mabel Davies. She assigned jobs to all the financially needy students, and these jobs paid 35 cents an hour. In one month you could work up to an average of \$10 to \$12, and checks were cashed at the business office."

Walt Styer said he wanted to pay a special tribute to Miss Mabel Davies: "She screened the applicants for NYA and also Camp Depression. She was always interested and very proud of the boys at camp... She was like a mother to us. If we had problems, we knew we could go to her and they would be resolved. When you would go to her office, there would always be a long line. She was a very dedicated person, and she never tired of helping students.

"When the war was over, my wife and I visited with her at the University of Washington, where she

was then working. We had a long visit and talked about the times at the University and especially Camp Depression. She represented UND with great honor."

...Working for degrees...

Students worked in a wide variety of jobs to "earn their keep," including instructors' assistants, dishwashing, book store employment and library, secretarial, janitorial and landscape work.

Lian said: "...When you registered for your classes you would have to pay about \$5 to become an official student. You could always borrow books to get started."

Lian noted that as business manager, Mr. Wilkerson was responsible for seeing that all students paid their tuitions, which was \$20 a month.

All students had paid a portion of their tuition to get started — however, toward the end of the semester Wilkerson would have to call a number of students into his office to read them the "riot act" to get them to pay up. Students then, as it is yet today, could not graduate or get their grades if they had not kept their accounts current.

In addition to Camp Depression, Macnie and Budge Halls, there were a few men who lived in the

abandoned Great Northern Depot on the south edge of campus.

"There were also about 15 men living under the football stadium, and about four men in the basement of the President's house, including my brother Glenn," according to Lian.

"The farm years in the 1930s weren't bad, they were disastrous... It rained mud if it ever rained. One year they had drought, the next year they had grasshoppers, and the next year they had nothing."

—Leslie G. Johnson, '41



The UND National Youth Administration was coordinated by the beloved Miss Mabel Davies. Several writers referred to Miss Davies in a thankful manner.

"Then there were always a few men living unofficially in attics of buildings or with students on a floor somewhere.

"I also recall one student who arrived a couple days before school started in the fall who built a small one-room shack. This was built in a grass field across the English Coulee.

"The shack was about eight feet by eight feet... we would see him walking back and forth all winter in the snow to class."

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This industrious homeowner to whom Lian is referring was probably Horace Milton Carson, '42, a Monango, N.D., native, now living in Modesto, Calif. Carson wrote about his experiences at UND and Camp Depression in "Selected Memories," published in 1991. In the book, he describes his days at UND:

"The University of North Dakota at Grand Forks was the only institution in the state which had a medical school; so I wrote them for information on enrollment requirements and available housing.

"I was accepted as a student and promised living quarters in their most recently developed housing facility — Camp Depression — where boys could do light housekeeping...

"...Well, there I was in Camp Depression — 250 miles from home for the first time, in strange surroundings and among strange people. Waves of homesickness were already beginning to sweep over me. If my dad hadn't already taken off for home, with the final remark, 'I'll be praying for you,' I would have been tempted to pile my gear back into the old car and go home again — to heck with college education...

"I am a natural born introvert, and the circumstances of my childhood tended to make me even more introverted — never at ease among strangers. I had always had my own room upstairs in our farm home, with all the privacy that one could desire.

"So the thought of living in the camp with no privacy whatever among several strange fellows —

"There were also about 15 men living under the football stadium, and about four men in the basement of the President's house, including my brother Glenn. Then there were always a few men living unofficially in attics of buildings or with students on a floor somewhere."

—Elmer Lian, '40

going to cope with this new situation.

"As I lay there, unable to sleep, I found myself thinking about an idle remark that my dad had made two or three weeks previously at the breakfast table. He had jokingly remarked that a poor person going to college could solve his housing problem if he had a claim shack in the nearby countryside.

"At the time I had considered the remark too ridiculous to even warrant a reply and had never thought of it afterward.

"Now, as I lay there sleepless during those early morning hours, that joking remark came back to me. Perhaps the idea wasn't as stupid as it had sounded. But how could a person have a claim shack when he had no land to put it on?"

Carson goes on to describe his exploration of the campus and his chance encounter with Guy Livingston, an assistant instructor in the history department.

Livingston was tending his jersey cow in the countryside near campus, and Carson explained to him that he was a new student, "a farm boy just out for a morning walk."

Livingston told him that it was indeed possible for Carson to own a small prairie tract.

"Immediately I knew what I would do. I would buy a lot, build a tiny cabin, and live in my home while I attended the University..."

our iron cots and our possessions all packed together and crowded into an old railroad car — began to appall me. I didn't sleep well that night — lying there tossing and turning and wondering how I was

"As I lay there, unable to sleep, I found myself thinking about an idle remark that my dad had made two or three weeks previously at the breakfast table. He had jokingly remarked that a poor person going to college could solve his housing problem if he had a claim shack in the countryside."

—Horace Carson, '42

He then headed to the courthouse to pursue the idea.

"Oh but life was simple in those days! I handed him (the courthouse clerk) my \$5; he filled out the necessary forms, and I was the owner of my first piece of real estate — ready to build a house. No title searches, no real estate brokers, no building permits, no building codes nor inspectors — just a plain and simple transaction... In the years since then I have been a party to many real estate transactions, but none was ever so simple or gave me such satisfaction."

Carson then hired a carpenter and his son to build an eight-foot-square cabin for \$35. The materials bill came to about \$40. He was a sensation for a time. Local papers wrote a few feature stories about him and one of these was picked up by the *Associated Press*.]

...Daily life...

Few students owned cars, but they managed to get around town on the streetcars and later the buses in Grand Forks. A bus provided service every 20 minutes between the University and downtown Grand Forks, and fare was five cents each way.

To get home during the holidays, students had to be a little more ingenious.

Lian said: "At Christmas time I would catch a ride with Eddie's Bread truck. The truck would leave Grand Forks at about 7 a.m. I would catch a ride back on Saturday or Sunday. If I could not find a ride back to Grand Forks, I would take the Soo Line Railroad from Fairdale to Ardoch where I would transfer to the Great Northern for the remaining 30 miles to Grand Forks."

The late Franklin Vikan, '34, a native of Bottineau, N.D., transferred to UND from the North Dakota School of Forestry in 1932 and lived in Camp Depression from 1933 to 1935. He wrote a feature story for the *Alumni Review* in anticipation of



Camaraderie in the cars. From left: Al Olsen, Kermit Larson, Ted Olafson and Hermann Olafson.

a 1975 Camp Depression reunion. The article was published in the October 1975 issue of the *Review*. Here's an excerpt:

"It might sound like hardship when you think of eight boisterous young men living and studying in one railroad caboose. But there were ground rules about hours of quiet, hours that the lights must be turned out and rules against drinking and gambling on the premises, all of which were observed to a more or less reasonable degree.

"At any rate, we lived through it and most of us must have gotten some studying done because I don't think many failed. I remember studious Ellsworth Gullekson, '37, of the Beltrami, Minn., area, who, although always busy with books, was never too busy to lay them down when someone wanted to visit.

"...Things were not as bad in Camp Depression as many outsiders thought. For instance, I recall when two of the men decided to go on a fast — just for fun.

"A news item in the *Dakota Student* called public attention to the fast, and it wasn't long before the Camp was deluged with cake, cookies, and other goodies from well-meaning housewives downtown. Anyway, about that time the fast was over because

one of the fellows got a job.

"...Strangely enough, everyone seemed to have enough money to go down to Whitey's or someplace on Saturday night. But then, back in those days, one could buy a 'mickey' of pure bootleg alcohol for one dollar — the same price as five gallons of gas...

"In spite of cramped quarters and occasional squabbles over who was to use the limited facilities of the kitchen and showers first, there was very little ill feeling around Camp. I do remember, however, one Saturday night when a Camp member and an outsider got into a fight and nearly wrecked our communal kitchen.

"The kitchen most often was the basis for complaints in one way or another. I remember one morning when an absentminded resident became so engrossed with studies that he went to class —

"It might sound like hardship when you think of eight boisterous young men living and studying in one railroad caboosé. But there were ground rules about hours of quiet, hours that the lights must be turned out and rules against drinking and gambling on the premises, all of which were observed to a more or less reasonable degree."

-Franklin Vikan, '34

story reporting two kitchenette cars had been added to Camp Depression.

"...Each car will be furnished with tables, a refrigerator, stove and sinks. Lockers for food supplies, towel racks and electric hot plates and toasters are also to be provided. Camp Depression is furnished with hot water, steam heat and electricity."

The kitchen car, or "Caboosé," had a number of small steel lockers in which people could keep their eating supplies. There were no padlocks because people just didn't steal from one another.

Finding cheap and ample food was apparently a challenge for these men, and eating arrangements were the source of many interesting stories and schemes. The president of the camp assigned two residents to be kitchen proctors each week. They were responsible for cleaning the kitchen — considered the most disagreeable job in the camp.

People understood how it was to be "hard up" and they would share what they had with one another. Sometimes they would cook up rabbits and tell the others it was chicken meat. Other times residents would bring leftover food from the commons. Silverware and dishes were provided so residents only had to supply the food.

forgetting that he had put two eggs on the tabletop electric heater to fry.

"The electric grill was nearly ruined, the skillet was no longer usable and the kitchen was all smoked up. The member who caused all the trouble was nearly excommunicated..."

The November 1934

Dakota Student carried a

Early residents bought food from Grand Forks grocery stores, but it wasn't long before The Commons developed a policy of selling leftover food.

Residents found it easier and about as economical to just buy these leftovers versus buying and cooking their own food.

Walt Styer operated the milk concession for the years 1938 to 1940. There was daily delivery of milk from a local dairy, and they provided a large refrigerator for dairy products.

Former residents have different views of the cooking and eating arrangements. Elmer Lian said he remembers them as being rather poor:

"I believe more than 75 percent of the men lived on sweet rolls and chocolate milk. The milk came in small 1/2 pint glass bottles. The milk was available from a refrigerator — you could write your name on a pad and pay at the end of the month when you received your NYA check. Milk was five

cents a 1/2 pint and 20 cents for a dozen rolls.

"...The boys did not go home except for Christmas and did not bring much food back then. It

should be recalled that the folks at home did not have too much food...times were hard at home and at school.

"I recall one student who would go downtown each Saturday and buy vegetables for soup. He then made a large pot of

soup and would eat it each evening... After about three days with no refrigeration, a green scum would form over the soup. He would just skim it off and eat some more.

"I don't recall anyone eating at the University Commons Cafeteria, because the price was too steep (29 cents for supper). However, there were some who washed dishes or waited tables who did eat there free."

Styer said he and Ray Rund, '41, (now residing in Finley, N.D.) cooked together at camp. Styer said: "In May 1983 my wife and I visited with Ray and his wife in Finley. Ray had saved for all these years the kettle we cooked in."

Laundry facilities consisted of the bathroom sink and a clothesline. Warm clothing was not always easy to come by, but one thing helped the men, at least the first two years: the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) was mandatory for all men, and the ROTC issued a pair of shoes, wool pants, wool shirt, wool army coat and a black tie.

Across the road from Camp Depression was the School of Mines building. The basement held a large laboratory with several long tables, where several of the young men would study in

"The kitchen most often was the basis for complaints in one way or another. I remember one morning when an absentminded resident became so engrossed with studies that he went to class — forgetting that he had put two eggs on the tabletop electric heater to fry."

-Franklin Vikan

January 28, 1935

Mr. Joe Davis, President
Camp Depression
University Station

Dear Mr. Davis:

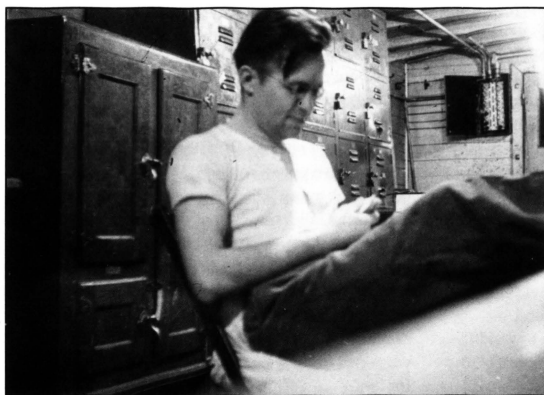
In going through Camp recently I noticed that the quarters are not being kept very clean, particularly the kitchen. I would appreciate it if you would call the attention of the boys to the importance of keeping the quarters clean and sanitary. I believe this to be necessary for the successful operation of Camp Depression.

This is not a command or particularly a criticism, but is offered in a friendly spirit by one who is interested in the welfare of the camp.

Yours very truly,

J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager

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Grafton, N.D., native Alton Torblaa studying into the early morning hours in the mess hall so as not to disturb his roommates, a sandwich in his hand and his feet on the dining table. Directly behind him is a refrigerator for perishables. Next to that are lockers for storage of food and utensils.

the evenings. Camp Depression men could also study in their "rooms."

Books and study materials were not easy to come by; one way to get around the cost was to have a couple students pitch in together and buy a used book. In addition, the library was required to have all textbooks on hand and available to students. The students borrowed from one another, too.

In a transcribed Homecoming 1975 interview, Raymond Rund and Judge Paul Benson, '42, of Fargo talked about their experiences regarding Camp Depression:

Rund said: "I was so happy that I was able to communicate with other people on my level... Eight guys to a boxcar, knowing when to keep your mouth shut when you'd like to spout off is one big thing and, I say, a lesson in tolerance.

"While we were crowded in those small boxcars one guy wanted to sing, one guy wanted to

play the radio, one guy wanted to hum, one guy wanted to study — we had a lot of problems but they all worked it out — talk about democracy!

"Putting eight different people from eight different types of backgrounds into one room and making them live together — that was really a lesson and I think I learned from that. Every day and every month I thought I was making progress. It was a wonderful feeling for me."

Benson said: "We had some very wonderful associations with students that stayed at the Camp. There was a lot of fun but very little friction. I know when the noise got too great to study we used to walk over to one of the classroom buildings and find an open room and study..."

"I remember distinctly that Ver! Clark and I would go over to the School of Education or one of those buildings that would be left open and go into a classroom and study there..."



Lunchtime at Camp Depression. This is a view of the cook car.

Rund added: "One thing I can remember is that we used to have a bunch of mice over there and they'd come into the place. They would poison those things and they would get back behind the walls and die. Then it would stink for a couple of weeks. You couldn't believe..."

"Other than that it would smell like tar once in a while because the roof leaked a little bit, but otherwise it wasn't all that bad."

Although formal methods of discipline were established to keep the Camp under relative control, unruly members were usually kept in line by other residents. The social life led by those in Camp Depression appears to have been somewhat lacking.

"While we were crowded in those small boxcars one guy wanted to sing, one guy wanted to play the radio, one guy wanted to hum, one guy wanted to study — we had a lot of problems but they all worked it out — talk about democracy! Putting eight different people from eight different types of backgrounds into one room and making them live together — that was really a lesson and I think I learned from that."

-Raymond Rund, '41

They were involved in a number of extracurricular activities, however.

A few former residents reported they sometimes felt a bit snubbed by the other students. Other individuals said this was not necessarily the case; times were hard for everyone and people didn't hold each other to class distinctions.

May 25, 1934

NOTICE

Our attention has been called by some of the more serious-minded students in Camp Depression that there are a few boys in the camp who are not observing the regulations pertaining to study hours, moral conduct, etc. There is entirely too much rowdiness and roughhousing, a part of which has been caused by outsiders. Some of these outsiders are known and have been warned that they are to stay away from Camp Depression, unless they can conduct themselves in a proper manner.

I would like to appeal to the sense of fairness and respect for the other students' privileges and welfare, as well as to issue a warning that rowdiness will not be tolerated. It has been reported also that in one or two instances intoxicating liquors have been used in the Camp and one or two boys have become intoxicated. Authority has been given to us to dismiss from Camp Depression upon sufficient evidence any student for practicing rowdiness or becoming intoxicated, or who does not comply with the rules pertaining to study hours, moral conduct, cleanliness, etc.

J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager

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...Off to war & careers...

The community of Camp Depression was disbanded in 1944, when the government sponsored an experimental lignite gasification plant on the site; this was later incorporated into the U.S. Energy Technology Center. The boxcars were dismantled and demolished, according to Lian.

With the start of World War II, many students were drafted into the service. A temporary slowdown in students lessened the need for Camp Depression, and by the time the University was booming again, after the War, new housing facilities had been added.

So, Camp Depression is now just a memory, and, like other circumstances that are shared by a large group of people, the memory is different with each individual's perspective.

Some remember it as one of the finest periods of their lives — being able to go to school, meeting interesting people and building for their future.

Others worry the memory of Camp Depression might become glamorized or elevated to an unrealistic height — Camp Depression was a cheap place to live and learn, and that's that, they say. But no matter how the former Camp Depression residents remember this special community, the truth remains.

Camp Depression was a typically North Dakota approach to a problem: practical, innovative and just a little 'different.' The name itself was appropriate for the times. However, experiences shared by residents of these most unique living quarters in UND's history indicate the name was somewhat misleading. Camp Depression was far from depressing — it was an opportunity. A living option for needy students that, in most cases, meant the difference between receiving a college education or not.

The men who experienced life in Camp Depression from 1933 to 1943 held their heads high, thankful for the opportunity to attend UND. They



Another view of the cook car (photo taken from the freezer area). This is the clean-up crew.

graduated from this University to outstanding achievements in a wide variety of professions, and carry with them fond memories of their days at UND and in Camp Depression.

Residents of Camp Depression and their hometowns* 1934-35 through 1942-43

John E. Abel, Karlsruhe
LaVeern Abelson, Sanish
Irving Amundson, Tioga
Wallace L. Anderson, Inkster
Edgar Baldner, Garrison
H. Dean Bartholomew, Beach
Arnold Baxstrom, Mylo
Paul E. Benson, Verona
Paul Brezden, Wilton
Oscar Broderson, Banks
David M. Brown, Hensel
Ted Brvins, Watford City
Robert Canan, Crookston, Minn.
Horace M. Carson, Monango
Richard Child, Regent
Roy Christianson, Edmore
Wallace A. Christianson, Crookston, Minn.

Leonard Christopherson, Wildrose
Verl Lee Clark, Petersburg
Arthur Cole Jr., Cogswell
William E. Crook, Rugby
Duane Crosby, Rolla
Francis Davis, Noonan
Joseph M. Davis, Noonan
Everett R. Dawson, St. John
Marion W. Dawson, St. John
Marvel Degerson, Banks
Herman Desautel, Michigan
Paul Ducharme, Red Lake Falls, Minn.
Milton A. Durkee, Abercrombie
Owen Eide, Ryder
John Ellingson, Ambrose
Russell Ellingson, Epping
Kenneth Enockson, Underwood

Stanley A. Erickson, Tioga
Robert J. Evans, Langdon
Harlow Evenson, Plaza
Elmer Farnam, Wildrose
Harold Ferguson, Forest River
Arnold Fjalstad, Edmore
Alfred Fjellanger, Tunbridge
Peter M. Flaa, Langdon
Keith Fleming, Williston
Russell Fleming, Ellendale
Kendall C. Fox, Van Hook
Bruce Frazer, Grand Forks
Raymond Friedrich, Fredonia
Paul Froemming, Elgin
Vernon Gardner, Kenmare
Thomas Gavere, Grand Forks

***Not a complete listing**

Arthur Gieselman, Donnybrook
Virgil Gilbertson, Turtle Lake
Arden Gjervold, Portland
John E. Goodman, Sheldon
Clarion Gernovich, Forest River
Gordon Gulmon, Ambrose
Kenneth Gulmon, Ambrose
Wilfred Gulmon, Sanborn
Obert Hagge, Hanks
Clifford H. Hall, Dahlen
Oscar Halverson, Wildrose
Donald Hammel, Marmarth
Leonard Hammer, Minot
E. Wynn Hanson, Rhane
Helmer Hanson, Wildrose
Loran Hanson, Cando
Percy F. Hanson, Edinburg
Otto C. Haug, Deering
Markham D. Hay, Crosby
Abraham Haykel, Drake
Alan S. Henderson, Crosby
Lloyd P. Heinzen, Garrison
Chester Heitsch, Rugby
Vincent Herseth, Drayton
Clinton Hess, Ellendale
Richard Hines, Gilby
Magnus Hjalmerston, Akra
Harold Hoaglan, Adams
Herbert Hoff, Wilton
Lee B. Hoffman, Minnewaukan
John Holodnick, Wilton
Carl R. Hove, Ray
John E. Howard, Hot Springs, S.D.
Norman Ihland, Abercrombie
Virgil Ihlen, Northwood
Odin Ingulsrud, Edmore
Russell H. Ireland, Corinth
Ingvald Iverson, Emmet
Alvin R. Jacobson, Tagus
Donald Jacobson, Crosby
Maurice J. Jacobson, Tagus
Robert L. Jefferies, Michigan
Lloyd O. Jensen, Drayton
Algot R. Johnson, McGregor
Leslie Johnson, Enderlin
Charles Kaplan, Raub
James Kimbra, Marmarth
Jack Kinsala, Gilby
Wallace Kirkness, Detroit Lakes, Minn.
Clarence W. Kludt, Bismarck
Milton Kludt, Bismarck
William Knoepka, Crookston, Minn.
Milton Knudt, Bismarck
Roy E. Kulland, Epworth

Francis A. Kummeth, Cogswell
Russell Lake, Penn
Marvin Larson, Glenfield
Albert Lee, Fingal
Gordon Lee, Fingal
Ernest Lees, Ellendale
Terrance G. Leonhardy, Williston
Cleo Levang, Adams
Elmer Lian, Fairdale
Allan Lindholm, Gilby
Warren G. Little, Bismarck
Roland Loeffler, Elgin
Martin V. Lohn, Fargo
Lester Lohse, Alamo
LeRoy Loken, Gilby
Glen McDaniel, Glenfield
Raymond McDaniel, Glenfield
Malcolm McDonald, Ellendale
Cameron McNiven, Brocket
Leo R. Martin, Overly
Barnie Matthiasson, Gardar
Berthold Medalen, Wildrose
Robert Miller, Minot
Norman Minor, Fairmont
James T. Montgomery, Niagara
Delbert Muth, Enderlin
Lloyd A. Nelson, Fairmont
Orville C. Ness, Battle Creek, Minn.
Raymond Ness, Ambrose
Harold Nessett, Sheldon
Roy Njos, Corinth
Dale M. Nordquist, Underwood
Clarence Norgaard, Hatton
Lowell O'Grady, Watford City
Robert O'Hearn, Fairmont
B.T. Olafson, Gardar
J. Hermann Olafson, Gardar
Merlin Olson, Parshall
Joseph P. Orley, Napoleon
Robert J. Orr, Pekin
Kenneth Ostreim, Leeds
Ervin Peterson, Pickardville
John E. Peterson, Oberon
Samuel M. Peterson, Verona
Theodore H. Peterson, Corinth
Joseph Pickard, Niagara
Roger Piehl, Marion
Robert Prickett, Wilton
Robert L.A. Propp, Washburn
Raymond Reistad, Springbrook
Vincent Reuter, Garrison
Frank J. Rice, Velva
Harvey Rice, Crary
Floyd Richards, Towner

Newton Rosenquist, Epping
Gust Rubash, Jr., Larimore
Raymond R. Rund, Goodrich
Arthur T. Saastad, Sawyer
Robert J.E. Salaba, Bathgate
Carl N. Saldin, Coleharbor
Laurence Samson, Akra
Clarence Satersen, Corinth
Donald Scaffier, Ambrose
Dale C. Schwartz, McClusky
Clifford Seglem, Corinth
Allen Severson, Beach
Charles E. Shirley, Velva
Seymour Sjurseth, Lakota
Donald E. Skjei, Williston
Roger J. Skjei, Williston
Howard Smith, Fort Totten
Howard C. Smith, St. Michael
T. Elwyn Smith, Edmore
William H. Smith, Edmore
Delbert Soderquist, Underwood
Herman O. Sogard, Alamo
Harold Sortokke, Sanger
Robert Stearns, Edmore
LeRoy L. Stefanowicz, Wildrose
Judean Steen, Oberon
Magus Stevenson, Cavalier
Douglas G. Stewart, Rolla
Edwin T. Stroller, Elgin
Arthur E. Storhaug, Alkabo
Leslie Strand, Minnewaukan
Walter S. Styer, Mekinock
John A. Thompson, Kensal
Alton L. Torblaa, Grafton
Lloyd J. Turner, Bartlett
Wayne Twito, Leeds
Donald Utke, Enderlin
Gordon A. Utke, Enderlin
Edward Van Steenvoort, Crary
Edgar P. Vie, Braddock
Franklin A. Vikan, Bottineau
Ralph Wales, Van Hook
Scott Walker, Ellendale
Lyle J. Wallace, Oberon
Stanley J. Walsh, Kensal
Burnell Waydeman, Anamoose
Philip W. West, Grand Forks
Richard Westberg, Williston
Walter Westberg, Williston
Curtis Wright, Michigan
Theodore J. Wysocki, Minto
Theodore Zagurski, Gorham
Victor Zerr, Harvey

Letters

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION received a good number of letters and memoirs from many alumni and former students, detailing their lives and circumstances during the Camp Depression era. The Alumni Association is grateful for these submissions, and we thank all of you who took the time to write about these special years at UND. The Alumni Association has turned these memoirs over to the UND Chester Fritz Library Special Collections, to be a permanent part of the University's historical records. Excerpts from the letters are included below and on the following pages.

*From John Goodman, ..'39
Leonard, North Dakota*

"It was 1934.
"Old Main was already old; New Merrifield was still new; John C. West was president and the Depression had grown to maturity.
"The New Deal had commissioned the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) to pay needy students \$15 monthly for part-time work on the campus. And the University of North Dakota administration had built a 'dormitory' out of a number of railroad cabooses and equipped them to house about 50 students.
"The cabooses were arranged in a square; two cabooses end-to-end formed a side. The ones on the west side comprised the kitchen car and the toilets. The other cars were living and study quarters and were numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Each car accommodated a maximum of eight kids.
"Camp Depression did not have a reputation for elegance then, and it seems perhaps even a little less lustrous now, but we had steam heat, electric lights, running water, flush toilets, and there were hot-plates and lockers in the kitchen. And there was even a telephone, #2776. Most of us had never 'had it so good.' We were required to work four hours a week for rent, usually for a janitor, and often for Adolph in New Merrifield.
"Lunchtime was almost hazardous. There were five or six hot-plates and most of us wanted one. Some would

take a dish over to The Commons, less than a block away in the charge of Charlie Judge, who would sell us a generous portion of the leftovers or hotdish for 5 or 10 cents. Charlie was everybody's friend and would sometimes come over to Camp to visit.
"We took turns cleaning up the 'can.' It was a four-holer, as I remember, with four lavatories. And we could run over to the Armory for a shower almost anytime.
"I'm sure that many of these guys have led distinguished careers and that all have served their country well. One, at least, Roy Christianson, a former roommate in Car 3, was killed over Germany in World War II"...

*From Franklin Vikan, '34
Fosston, Minnesota*

"For me, the 'forecast' of Camp Depression began possibly when I was five years old, at which time our home on a little farm in the Turtle Mountains near Bottineau burned. And, it was less than two years later that my father died of cancer.
"This left us in a rather difficult state and, being the youngest of eleven children, I felt the stress. My first job was attained when I was in about the fifth grade and I delivered meat and scraped blocks for Charlie Beaver, who had a meat market. Things moved along and when the depression and drought of the Thirties came along, I

was fortunate enough to get a running start in college by attending the first two years at Bottineau U.
"After going to UND, I was fortunate enough to get into Camp Depression. It was funny how some of the women downtown in Grand Forks thought we were bad off and sent out cookies and other goodies for the 'poor fellows' at Camp Depression...as for me, I guess I had never lived better in my life.
"Among the side jobs which I had while at the University was a part-time assignment at The Commons, the campus cafe. It was a matter of being 'on call' and I worked when they needed me. The result was that the manager of the Commons often came over to Camp Depression and stuck his head in the door and called in a loud voice, 'Vikan, we need you!' This didn't sit too well with the fellows in my caboose.

February 8, 1935

Mr. Joe Davis, President
Camp Depression
University Station

Dear Joe:

I have talked over with President West the situation in Camp Depression and we have decided to promote you to faculty representative in the camp on account of the good influence you have had with the boys over there and the interest you have taken. I do not know whether it would be wise to give out this information on account of the attitude that some of the boys in the camp might take, but we will leave this to your judgment.

We assume that you will continue as president and that your relations will be about the same as they were, with the understanding that you will serve as the representative of the Administration.

If you have any objection or comments to make in connection with this arrangement, I shall be glad to confer with you at any time.

Very sincerely,

J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager

jww.mh

"However, there was a reward because I worked for meals and when spring came I had more credit than I could use up for meals so I would take my friends over for a malted milk, or other goodies.

"After more than 50 years as a newspaper editor, I now look back in retirement and remember all the pleasant times we had at Camp Depression and have often wished that I could have bought the car in which I lived and put it in my backyard."

*From C.W. Kludt, ..'38
Crookston, Minnesota:*

"It took a long time to find the old note I signed along with my sister, Mrs. E.R. Wolt of Crystal Springs, N.D., back on Sept. 20, 1937, for the \$240 at one percent interest to help me get through my freshman year at the University... I made the last payment on the note from England just prior to my taking part of the invasion into Normandy in World War II. It was my only debt.

"I taught country school for one year, and after four-plus years in Army Air Force in World War II, I studied at the St. Paul College of Law; I received my B.S.L. in June 1951. I received my J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law. I was admitted to practice in Minnesota Jan. 5, 1951 and retired in 1992."

*From O.H. Hagge, ..'43
Olympia, Washington:*

"In the fall of 1942, I enrolled at the University of North Dakota and my quarters were at Camp Depression. I worked for my board at what was called The Commons then, in the building that was just a short distance west of Camp Depression and southwest of Budge Hall...

"There were three of us in the most southwesterly corner caboose car: Jack Thompson, Orvil Johnson and myself. Orvil was a junior mechanical engineer and Jack and I were both freshmen engineers. Orvil would entertain

us with his trumpet. There were quite a few others in the Camp, but I have forgotten their names. I do remember that they were all a swell bunch of guys.

"The caboose cars were very comfortable, I thought, steam-heated so there was no coal to carry. Being only 18 years old at the time, this was an exciting experience for me. The cars were painted all gray inside. There were places to hang clothes and I recall that we could store some of our things up higher in the little second-story lookouts that all the cars had.

"I was there for only the fall semester, because of the war. We all, it seemed, were waiting to be called into the service, or, as many did, volunteer. The caboose was a nice warm friendly place on those cold nights when the temperature dipped to the -30s, which it did quite frequently that winter. Every evening I would put in my time in the commons dishroom, working to pay for my board, which I do remember was about \$15 per month.

"On Saturdays, I would do janitor work...in the Medical Building. That paid for my room, which I believe was ten dollars per month.

"Jack Thompson was the baker or assistant to the baker at the Commons, so it was necessary that he get up about 3 or 4 in the morning in preparation for the day. I felt so sorry for him. It looked as though he wasn't supposed to get any sleep.

"At that time also, many students would send their laundry home in those little canvas-covered board boxes. It cost 25 cents for postage and in the following week we would have our clothes back again, fresh and clean."

*From Roland Loeffler, '40
Modesto, California:*

"My experiences in Camp Depression ran from September 1938 to January 1940, when I moved to Macnie Hall. The student who made the most lasting impression on me was Jim Miller, who told me this story as we were chatting in his room at Macnie. Opening his closet door, he showed me his 'financial insurance' which he never had to use. It was about a half a bushel of parched corn.

"Jim was Native American and the oldest in a fatherless family, so his summer earnings went to buy school clothes for his younger sisters and brothers. He had brought the corn along in the fall to keep himself

alive until he could earn money while attending Law School.

"He never needed to eat the corn because he prepared sandwiches in the Camp Depression kitchen and used a coast wagon to deliver them and two kinds of milk to the fraternities and sororities at 9 p.m. every weekend! I lost contact with Jim but heard later that he was killed in an accident.

"Here is another example of resourcefulness in Camp Depression. Jim Miller had organized a 'co-op' for feeding noon and evening meals to the boys in one kitchen and I managed a 'co-op' in the other kitchen. We had about 15 to 20 boys who paid \$2 per week for these two meals — meat with one of the meals and dessert with the other! I did the purchasing every Saturday on my bicycle. The groceries were delivered and on the way back to Camp I picked up a large cardboard carton full of day-old bread to carry on the handlebars of my bike.

"I continued my bikeriding to and from my teaching chemistry at Modesto Junior College from 1954 to 1985 and still have enough stamina to do square dancing several evenings each week."

*From Larry Aasen, '47
Westport, Connecticut:*

"In the summer of 1942 I decided to transfer from the North Dakota Agricultural College to UND so I could get a major in journalism. I didn't bother to tell UND about my plans... I just walked to Highway 81 and hitchhiked to UND. They were very nice and understanding and quickly enrolled me in journalism. Then they asked me where I would stay. I said I didn't know!

"So they wrote out the note: 'Lawrence Aasen has permission to stay in Camp Depression temporarily,' and I stayed there for about two weeks until I was moved into Budge Hall, sharing a small room with James Miles, '43, '44, now of Fargo, and Dutch Omdahl, '43, now of Billings, Mont.

"Camp Depression was not depressing. We all had a good time and were grateful to have a roof over our heads.

"And they didn't charge me a nickel!"

*From Dick Raatz, '41
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota:*

"I was one of those tenants who occupied those old railroad caboose/bunk cars while attending the University of North Dakota during the 1940-41 school year. It adequately met our needs for a place to stay, study, sleep and eat and it was managed by a lovely and compassionate lady named Miss Davies. She would also find us extra menial jobs, both on and off campus to earn a little spending money. Having just graduated from Verona, North Dakota, High School in 1940, all the money that I had was from the 25 cents per hour wages I received that fall from hauling grain bundles for threshing...

"I also remember getting a part-time job at the Ryan Hotel peeling potatoes and washing pots, pans and dishes. I don't recall what I was paid for doing this, but I do remember getting plenty of food and milk to last me for a few days.

"When I first arrived on campus I was introduced around to some of the guys by my friend Paul Benson, also of Verona. He introduced me to a guy named Arley Bjella, '41, HON, '89 (now of Edina, Minn.) who immediately called me Dick. This name has stuck with me every since. I also saw my first football game. It was a memorable one, against the North Dakota Agricultural College, now North Dakota State University.

"On the first play of the game, NDAC kicked off and a guy by the name of Wally Dobler took the ball nearly to the end zone where he reversed his run and then went down the other side of the field for a touchdown...

"Then came Homecoming Day. We at Camp Depression decided to enter a float in the parade. Miss Davies found us a flatbed trailer which we decorated with red, white and blue bunting and erected a platform with the Statue of Liberty towering high on the trailer.

"It looked like a mannequin up there but to everyone's surprise it was a real live guy named Lyle (Wallace, I think). Anyway, we won first place prize for

November 24, 1933

Mr. Blair Wardrope
Camp Depression
University Station

Dear Blair:

The Great Northern officials have made the request that we secure the cooperation of the boys in Camp Depression in protecting their telephone lines and cables along the track from rifle shooting. It seems that some boys who do not know the destruction they are committing, have a habit of shooting at birds on the wires and cables. If they make a hole in a lead cable, it allows water and moisture to penetrate the wires and trouble is caused immediately. Since the Great Northern was very kind to us in turning the cabooses over to us at a very low price, we should cooperate with them in every way possible.

If the boys living in the cabooses would render assistance in this connection, the Great Northern officials will be appreciative of anything that is done.

Yours very truly,
J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager

jww.mh

our entry and were honored to parade it around the whole stadium during halftime at the football game. I was one of the guys on the float that was wearing a football uniform. That was about the closest I ever came to having anything to do with football.

"That year was my first and only case of homesickness. I recall climbing one of the railroad cars that were strung along the side of the campus just to look out over the empty fields in the direction of Verona. It actually worked. I felt a lot better after that.

"I dispatched trains for the North Pacific Railway and Burlington Northern from 1947 to 1982, with 20 years at Fargo and then 15 years here in Minneapolis where I now live in retirement with my wife of 44 years, Darlene.

"...Life is GREAT."

*From Francis W. Loomer, '37
Glasgow, Montana*

"I did not live in Camp Depression but I cooked my meals there. Each of us had a small locker in which to store food. (No refrigeration, of course.) There were a number of hotplates and toasters in each of the cabooses. The hotplates and toasters were all chained down. Can openers were essential.

"I recall once that because of the cost of butter, we found it less expensive to get together and buy a large jar of salad dressing and used that for butter.

"At one time I sold my hat for \$2 to buy food. Many were the times when I had worn holes in the soles of my shoes and inserted cardboard so that I could continue to wear them. We did not realize we were poor. We just did what we had to do. We were all in the same situation. During my senior year I did not buy a single book — I borrowed and used the library. I became a teacher and held the position of high school principal at Glasgow, Mont., for the last 31 years of my teaching career.

"It would be great fun to be able to sit down and talk with some of the former students who were there at that time."

*From Arnold Arndt, '34
Chapel Hill, N.C.*

"I don't know how many persons are aware of an adjunct to the Camp Depression composed of the cabooses donated by the Great Northern Railway.

"Seven of us students cleaned out the room on the top of Babcock Hall that contained the bird display and we were supplied with a set of bunk beds and five cots. When we came up the stairs at the end of the day we passed the stuffed buffalo at the entrance to the museum.

"We didn't have the convenience of showers in the building, so we had to go to Budge Hall, which was an invigorating experience at night going back and forth in a bathrobe. But as they said at the time, 'You have to get rugged or get rigid!'"

*From Philip W. West, '35, '36, HON, '58
Baton Rouge, Louisiana:*

"Only those who lived through the depression of the thirties can appreciate the contributions provided by Camp Depression. Only those of us who were students and very, very needy know how the privilege of living in Camp Depression made it possible for us to obtain an education.

"We who pioneered the first year and saw the personal achievements made possible by the unique housing project known as Camp Depression can reflect with pride and thanks — we hope that we have paid back in our own ways what has been made possible through the support provided by UND and the opportunities we thus received.

"We all had it tough... Although there was no money available except for a few dollars earned during the summer teaching swimming and life-saving, and fifty dollars given me by a bedridden World War II veteran who I visited daily going by on the way to the beach at Maple Lake where I was a lifeguard, I was determined to go to UND in accordance with my mother's dying wish.

"Bob Canan, who spent summers at the lake, learned of my plans. He was almost equally destitute but decided that if I could try, he too would go to UND. Upon arriving on campus I was fortunate to meet some members of Phi Alpha Epsilon (now TKE) who promised to get me a job if I would join the fraternity. I did and they did. The \$4.51 I earned as an usher at the Paramount Theater each week scarcely paid for my share of the room we shared.

"Bob couldn't find a job and the meager support he could get from home soon drove us down — that is, to the basement. The rent was cheap enough but there was no heat because the furnace was insulated. When winter set in and temperatures dropped to the minus 30s and 40s, water left out in the basement froze. We did have a single burner where we could cook oatmeal, spaghetti and weenies.

"Then the banks closed and my pay at the theatre stopped as did Bob's occasional check from home. We spent ten days limited to eating a half loaf of bread Bob found in the alley.

"The tough times were over when Camp Depression was established and later, the federal government created the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The camp provided a warm place to stay and WPA jobs, usually quite modest, provided income for families, including some students.

I was especially fortunate because Dr. G.A. Abbott, head of the chemistry department, selected me to be his assistant to wash his dishes, clean his laboratory, set up lecture demonstrations and assist at times... Dr. Abbott never stopped talking so I was treated day after day to personal tutoring and guidance from a great teacher.

"Although I had done poorly in freshman chemistry, possibly because of lack of sleep and little interest, working with Dr. Abbot inspired me so much that I did very well in quantitative analysis... It's of interest that Deans were more lenient during the depression, at least at UND and the University of Iowa, where I received my Ph.D., because one of the objectives was to help students graduate. Considerable flexibility and compassion was shown which permitted me to work full-time from the end of my junior year to final graduation with my master's degrees.

"When Camp Depression was first opened, there were only about 20 of us living in three railway cabooses, with another unit divided to provide toilets and a small kitchen. Then we grew with additional cabooses and a major improvement to our quality of life. After meals were over at the cafeteria and the steam tables were being cleaned, we could purchase meats, vegetables, and sometimes desserts. These were dumped into 'syrup' pails for later sorting and consumption. The cost was 35 cents for enough food for two or three and we thought we were in heaven!

"I retired from Louisiana State University as Boyd Professor of Chemistry Emeritus. After retiring, I co-founded West-Paine Laboratories, Inc., an environmental laboratory in Baton Rouge, which was purchased by

Inchcape, Inc., of London. It has been great fun and UND and Camp Depression helped make it all possible."

*From Walt Westberg, '44
Gainesville, Florida:*

March 21, 1935 NOTICE - FIRST WARNING

This week's committee has fallen down on the job of keeping the community kitchen clean. Several of the former committees have been negligent in their duties in this respect. There has been so much negligence that we may have to acknowledge the plan of a community kitchen a failure and devote these cabooses to dormitory use. This will serve as a warning that this kitchen must be kept clean or its use will be discontinued for this purpose.

**J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager**

"I first heard of

Camp Depression when I was a senior in Williston High School, graduating in the spring of 1939. A couple of friends, Roger and Donald Skjei, were planning to attend UND the coming fall and that was the name of the so-called dormitory where they would live.

"They hadn't seen the place but it was vaguely described as 'some boxcars fixed up,' and it was cheap. They found out that no real dollars were required; the occupants did campus janitorial work as payment, four hours a week.

"I stayed at home for a year, working in a grocery store. Brother Rich and I went off

together in the fall of 1940 — Arley Bjella was instrumental in persuading our parents that this was the thing to do. It's a whole other story how we got there — in a 1926 Pontiac.

"We arrived late at night and stumbled into Morkrid's rooming house on University Avenue. Sounded like a mortuary, especially at night, to two bewildered freshmen in a strange place.

"The next day we found the campus and Camp Depression. The boxcars turned out to be old cabooses which had been hauled over from the nearby railroad tracks. They were pushed into a quadrangle, put up on concrete blocks, wired for electricity and fitted with steam-heated radiators.

"There were seven or eight of the old monsters. They were grey, faced with the vertical, grooved car siding, and they had numbers. Ours was No. 5. To get in, you had to climb the original metal stairs, grabbing the iron railings that were at the ends of all railroad cars. The couplings were still in place, but the wheels were gone.

These were the old-style cabooses with the large, full-width observation cupolas on the roof. Through its numerous windows a crewman could see well ahead and behind, to be alert for hazards or to signal the engineer.

"Since my brother and I had worked on the railroad section gang for two summers, we were familiar with the interior of cabooses, but our No. 5 had been changed somewhat. There were three sets of double bunks along one wall. On the opposite wall was a long bench-like work surface for use as a communal desk. There even

was room for an old wicker sofa, upon which were lounging our Williston colleagues, the Skjeis. Roger was in chemical engineering, Don in pre-med.

"After much boisterous greeting, Rog insisted that he 'show us the place.' We moved to the open space under the cupola and I saw that all the tool cabinets for the railroad workers had been removed and the area was now used for clothes and storage. Rog said that all the doors connecting the cabooses were nailed shut, but he would show us a unique way we could visit our next-door neighbors. He buzzed up a little ladder on the wall to the cupola, opened one of the small windows and was on the roof before we knew it. Rich and I followed, walking and leaping, when necessary, over the gap in the roof line between cars, and descended into Car No. 3.

"We met the guys, mostly engineers, and admired their car's amenities. Ernie Lees, an electrical engineer, noted amongst other things for his size 13 shoes, could lie in his bunk and control many of the cabin's functions. He had rope and pulley arrangements to tune his radio on a shelf across from his bunk, adjust the main radiator valve and actuate the cabin light switch at the front door. The guys had built a lot of bookshelves and cabinets and had scrounged extra mattresses for some of the bunks. They had also swiped a real floor lamp from a girls' dorm, probably Davis Hall.

"The camp was located back of the campus power plant and close to various railroad buildings that grumbled with compressor motors and belched smoke and steam. About 50 yards to the rear I could see the monstrous arched ice arena building. Our dormitory was definitely located on the fringes of the campus. We soon learned that we were out of the mainstream, socially as well as physically.

"A cooperative meal plan was just beginning, run

by two enterprising young students. Two dollars a week. The menu proved to be marginal: potatoes, turnips, a little meat and bread. A mixture of Karo syrup and peanut butter to spread on the bread was called 'the mix.' It was common to holler, 'Pass the mix (expletive deleted)!' After a few months of this, I developed boils on my neck and nurse Ruth Noren suggested a better diet. Rich and I got jobs at the Commons cafeteria, which was great.

"We settled ourselves in Car No. 5, getting last choice on bunks. After registering and enrolling in freshman engineering, our first duty was to line up janitorial jobs. I also

got an NYA [National Youth Administration] job at 35 cents an hour. I worked a few hours a week copying music in the band office and running errands for John Howard, the band director. Frankie Ball was his secretary.

"I don't recall feeling inferior or inordinately deprived because I lived in the most humble dormitory on campus. I do remember being immensely stimulated by the campus atmosphere and intellectual climate and was very glad to be away from home and actually at a university.

"We were also 'rushed' by a couple of fraternities, even though we let them know it was unlikely we could afford to join. One Sunday afternoon we were at an unnamed frat house getting the treatment. We met a lot of interesting members, but I never will forget the one who asked where we were rooming.



"To show our appreciation for what the University had done for us we invited, in the spring of 1937, a representative group including Mr. Webb, Miss Davies and some ladies to a luncheon," Owen Eide said. "That is Mr. Webb with hat in hand, standing with the cooks of the day. We picked the best cooks, naturally, for this rather ticklish event. I was not one of them."

"His 'Oh' reaction to our answer will stick with me forever. I was thereafter turned off by frats, which was a shame, because Rich and I badly needed the social polishing that a good fraternity could have provided. Well, it wasn't all bad. We got in with a scroungier group and had a great time anyway.

"It would be hard to imagine a more disparate group of people than the camp residents.... Ernie Lees [was] bright, sociable and helpful. He became a good friend and was a key participant in the engineers' 'Bomb Day' a couple of years later. Like all of us, he lived in the camp because he couldn't afford to live anywhere else.

"Ted Wysocki was the camp genius. His very bad eyesight required him to read everything from a distance of two inches, but he was a math wizard. 'Mack' McDonald was much like Lees and lived in the same cabin, as did Dave Brown, a mechanical engineer.

"Practical jokes were in order in car No. 5 as they are in any University dorm. One of the Skjeis had the habit of coming in, taking a couple of long strides, leaping up to his upper bunk and flopping there with a groan of contentment. The bunk spring arrangement was primitive. It consisted of flat ribbons of steel, secured all around to the main bed frame with small coil springs.

"One afternoon, before he came home, his roomies unhitched the springs and refastened them with light loops of grocery string. We settled down, apparently to study, but keeping an expectant eye out for the big event.

"Skjei flounced in and went into his acrobatic act. His groan of pleasure, when his back touched the mattress, turned into a yelp of surprise and anguish when he ended up in the lower bunk with a crash. Lots of chasing and hollering followed.

"An event later in the fall was both exciting and a little scary — the famous Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940. We didn't have the elaborate weather department warnings in those days that we have now. So snow was predicted.

"Boy, did it snow. We spent the night mostly oblivious to the magnitude of the storm and awoke the next morning to marvel at the size of the drifts blocking our way to the outside world. Another clue to the nature of the storm was in the form of a strange body sleeping in our extra bunk. He had been wandering out late at night and took refuge in the nearest building at the height of the storm. We could go nowhere... The campus was completely isolated from the rest of the town.

"One of the signs of spring in the camp, we were to learn, was to treat the 'buggers' under the floors of the cabooses. What the buggers were, no one was quite sure, but presumably consisted of various vermin who had sought warmer quarters for the winter and emerging

insects of an unknown nature.

The procedure was to open a trapdoor or two in the floor and pour about five gallons of creosote down the hole. The odor normally coming up from the nether regions was not nice, but it became different, not better, by the addition of the powerful creosote.

"One final camp story.

"Ernie Lees had acquired an old Model T Ford somewhere. Since Rich and I had owned and fixed and diddled with our T in high school, I offered to help him when he wanted to correct a problem in the differential. He had pulled the relic around to the back of the camp and had the

rear end up on blocks. With primitive wrenches we disassembled the differential, put in shims here and there to take out some of the 'play.' As if the whole car didn't have lots of play.

"We belabored the thing back together, found no extra parts, and Ernie started the engine. It ran very well, with little play, but backwards! Ernie, a true experimentalist, left it that way for a few days while he drove around the campus to hardly anyone's consternation.

"For reasons I can no longer remember or fathom, Rich took off for Williston without me in our car. I must have had to stay a bit longer for some reason. At any rate, I climbed on the train, only some hours after he had left.

NOTICE

We have decided that the community kitchen plan is a failure and anyone using the kitchen may get their personal effects from it by seeing Mr. Vikan, who has the key. The University cannot afford to spend money in keeping the place clean and it seems that the occupants are not inclined to do so. We have decided, therefore, that it is best to close the kitchen. It will be closed this afternoon, Tuesday, April 23.

**J.W. Wilkerson
Business Manager**

"It was a unique experience to be tooling along the North Dakota prairie on the Empire Builder, while looking out the window at one's brother on the highway, unsuccessfully racing the train in the old Pontiac. I got off the train at some small town ahead and we continued home in the car to work on the section gang during the summer.

"Only half the summer, it turned out. The war was well underway and the draft board was after us. To get a student deferment we had to be back at school so back we went to a summer session. Most of our engineering classmates had stayed on for the newly organized full semester summer school. Rich and I had some doing to catch up. While living in the campus depot!"

From Judge Milton A. Kludt, '40
(retired, 9th Judicial District, Minnesota)
Fargo, North Dakota

"My brother, attorney C.W. Kludt of Crookston, Minnesota, lived in Camp Depression before I spent my freshman year there in 1938-39. Knowing what to expect made it easier.

"Pipes carrying live steam from the light plant to the stadium came through the caboose. We slept in bunkbeds. In cold weather the fellow below me used my blankets and froze. I did not need blankets.

"My cooking partner was another freshman — Seymour Sjurseth. The electric two-burner stoves were terrible. We usually split a can of vegetables and ate bread that Seymour got for five cents a loaf. First we cut the mold off...

"One of my NYA jobs was loading the ceramics in the kiln and helping to fire the kiln. The professors felt so sorry for me. Their friend was in charge of The Commons. They arranged for me to go to the back door of The Commons each night when it was time for them to close down, and I was given whatever food that had not been sold, and otherwise would have been disposed of. Seymour and I, and a few others, ate pretty good those nights.

"Seymour saw lutefisk displayed in boxes or baskets in front of grocery stores. He carried on about

April 23, 1935

To Mr. Wilkerson:

We, the Undersigned, are sorry that the Camp Kitchen was neglected, and hereby promise that if we are permitted the use thereof that will keep the same clean and in order.

(Signed by several Camp boys)

how good it was. We bought some, he prepared it, and we ate it. At Thanksgiving he took me with him to his home. He could hardly wait to tell his mother about the lutefisk.

"I will never forget how his mother carried on in disbelief that we had eaten this lutefisk without properly rinsing it, and without butter. Nor will I forget how bad Seymour's dad felt because he (a small-town banker) could not afford to give Seymour more financial help."

From Francis A. Kummeth, '43
Goshen, Indiana:

"From the fall of 1941 until late 1942, I was a resident of Camp Depression. I transferred from Mayville State Teachers College where I was able to attend solely because of a NYA project which provided my tuition, books, room and board in exchange for about 100 hours of work per month. Consequently, I needed every bit of help I could find to attend the University of North Dakota and Camp Depression was part of the answer. For four hours work a week, a student had a place to live with a weekly change of linens. Who could ask for anything more?

"After completing arrangements to live in the camp, I sought out the 'Meal Cooperative.' As I recall, the Cooperative provided lunch and dinner on weekdays and a special mid-day meal on Sunday for \$5 per week. Ray McIntee had just signed me up when a member of the University staff stopped by to check with him as to how things were going. Ray indicated they had enough participants but needed a couple of cooks.

"He then looked at me and asked if I cooked. When I hesitated, he explained that the fare was simple, like

spaghetti and tomatoes, mashed potatoes, etc. Since cooks received free meals for cooking three days a week and every other Sunday, I became a cook.

"One of the residents, I believe his name was Bob Orr and he was from Indiana, did not like to just buy candy. He wanted to win the candy, so we would play draw poker to see whether he paid double or nothing. Since he always had more bars coming than he wanted and often could pay, we kept a running record of the bars due and what he owed. Ever so often he would settle his account by selling the bars back at three for 10 cents and paying the balance.

"We had our own intramural basketball team which did win some games. One of these was a fluke, when in the last seconds of the game I attempted to retrieve a ball going out of bounds to pass to a teammate standing alone under the basket. I could not get a good hold on the ball so I just hooked it up in the air in hopes it would come down on the court near the basket. It went through the basket and we won by a point.

"1942-43 was a tumultuous year as far as campus politics were concerned. The Greeks who had always dominated were seriously challenged by the independents. More important, there was a campus-wide campaign for increased participation of the students in the overall government of the campus. To coordinate the campaign, leaders of both groups secretly met to exchange information on their campaigns to maximize student political interest.

"I was not in attendance at any of the meetings nor do I know where they met when the Greek leaders were 'hosts' but I do know that Greek leaders, on several occasions, slipped into the Camp via the railroad tracks to set up plans for the following days. All of this resulted in

significant changes in the Student Senate and University government.

"Radios were not plentiful or cheap and television was *not* — period. Some engineering students furnished us with crystals from the engineering lab and some badly worn but working head phones. With a little instruction, a piece of wood, some wire and a paper clip, we fashioned crystal sets which worked quite well. Using tinfoil, we determined that the ground side of the electric wiring and used that for an antenna.

"I used to regularly wake up at 1 a.m. to listen to Ted Lewis broadcast from a hotel in downtown Chicago. ('Is everybody happy?') We did manage to resurrect a regular radio to listen to the news when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

"I went away to college with a new suit, enough everyday clothing so I needed to do laundry only once a week, and \$150. I received no more funds from home. When I graduated in 1943, I had twice as many clothes and a bank account of nearly \$400 — Camp Depression was no small contributor to this."



Formal Camp Depression photo, published in the *Dacotah* annual of 1937. Listed as follows (first names not supplied): BACK ROW: Lang, Peterson, Gulmon, Reistad, Ness, Hjalmeron, Olafson; FOURTH ROW: Rosenquist, Bonlie, Fjellanger, Howard, Stefanowicz, Sogard; THIRD ROW: Hammar, Ellingson, Goodman, Fjalstad, Rice, Roberge, Medalen; SECOND ROW: Michon, O'Grady, Abelson, Hoaglan, Matthiasson, Heller; FIRST ROW: G. Lee, Eide, Ducharme, Stenson, Vie, Lohse, Lian. FRONT: Utke. NOT PICTURED: Gardner, Hanson, D. Lee, Rund, Bundy, Lenarze.

From Vernon E. Gardner, '38
Falls Church, Virginia:

"In the fall of 1936 I enrolled at UND as a junior in electrical engineering, having completed two years of engineering at what is now the UND-Bottineau Branch. I had been promised a National Youth Administration job but I also needed to stay at Camp Depression if I had any chance of surviving financially.

"Mabel S. Davies, Director of Student Employment, seemed very reluctant to let me stay but eventually said: 'I am moving you into Car 7 with the best fellows in Camp.' These fellows were: John E. Howard, Harvey Rice, Leonard Hammar, Gordon Lee and Albert Lee (Gordon's younger brother). There were other engineering students in Camp Depression, namely Edgar P. Vie, Owen Eide, and Paul Ducharme. Half of these fellows were recognized eventually by receiving such honors as a Boise Scholarship or election to Sigma Tau, the engineering honor society.

"The Camp members did not represent a homogeneous group. So not surprisingly we had a few who were noisy, slovenly and foulmouthed and not about to discipline themselves to studying. Under these living conditions many of us had to find locations away from Camp for studying... Occasionally the kitchen could be a mess, with, among other things, its broken glass. When it was Owen Eide's and my turn to clean the kitchen it failed to pass inspection by a non-resident team although Owen and I had taken time out from our studies to put forth our best effort.

"On one occasion my suitcase was destroyed by a fire caused by a visitor throwing his burning cigarette in a wastepaper basket. The Camp fire extinguishers were useless because the members had drained them for use in dry cleaning. So the Fire Department had to be summoned.

"The Camp had no bathing facilities so most of us depended on the Armory. That was convenient for me because I worked out regularly with the boxing squad where H.H. Russell was putting in his last year of coaching boxing. Late one evening three of us found ourselves locked out of the Armory... When we pounded on the door Horace 'Hoss' Johnson, who had sleeping quarters in the Armory, got up and let us in, although he was sick in bed with the flu. Hoss was the black football, basketball and track letterman and roommate of

Frederick 'Fritz' Pollard, another great black athlete of that period.

"...I kept accurate records of my expenses during my college days and still have my records. For the 1936-37 year my total expenses were \$264.93, the main expense being \$70.02 for food, \$62 for tuition and fees, and \$37.31 for books. On Thanksgiving Day we were treated to a dinner at what was then the Elgin Cafe in Grand Forks. I am sorry to say that I never did learn the identity of the donor or donors.

"The big event at Car 7 was when Gordon Lee, an engineering honor student, won the Northwest Golden Glove Flyweight boxing championship at the Twin Cities. About ten days before the event he was notified that he could compete. His weight, however, had gone up to 135 pounds! There followed a severe starvation and dry out process that brought his weight down to 114 pounds at the weigh-in.

"It had been decided that each boxer could come in a pound overweight because of the possible difference in scales. So Gordon was given a few hours to get rid of that extra pound and at the second weigh-in he weighed in at 113 pounds. He went on to win the gold medal but judging from his bruised face he had to work for it.

"Car 7 resident John E. Howard, '39, '41, a lifelong educator, died in 1984. I have copies of three of the books he authored: *Six Shorts, Up in Them Hills Naked*, and *My Name is Orrin Palmer*.

"After a brief period in industry and teaching electrical engineering at UND I went to Washington, D.C., for an interview with Hyman G. Rickover. After the usual unorthodox interview I was hired as a civilian electrical engineer in the Navy Department.

"I decided to make a career of this work and after retirement from the Navy Department, worked for several years as a consultant. Although my career was not very impressive, Marquis Who's Who has stretched a point and given me brief write-ups in Who's Who in the South and Southwest in most of its issues since 1975."

From William C. Olson, '36
Chattanooga, Tennessee

"I did not stay in Camp Depression but did cook my meals in a kitchen which was in the Camp Depression area. I stayed at Macnie Hall and worked

three hours a week for my room. This dormitory was next to the President's house. [Macnie Hall] had been a residence for women, but in 1934 it was made into a men's dormitory and double-decker beds were put into each room to permit two students to be in each room...

"We were all assigned work. I was given the task of mopping the power station floors and dusting the machinery. The first month there I was given the task of unloading a carload of lignite coal and putting it into the power station coal storage room. My roommate was Ellsworth 'Gully' Gullekson. Gully and I came from the town of Beltrami, Minn. We were both sons of farmers.

"There was a fellow from western North Dakota who cooked with me. His name was Herbert Wheeler. We were able to get canned meat once in a while. The WPA purchased it, canned it and gave it to the needy. Bert Wheeler brought a bushel of tomatoes one fall... I believe he paid either 25 cents or 50 cents for the bushel. I also brought things from my home when I was able to get there by hitchhiking.

"In those days I had to pay \$45 out-of-state tuition. The average for the two years I spent at UND was between \$200 and \$250 per year. I transferred to the University of Minnesota and graduated in 1940. I could never have been able to finish college had I not had the advantage of going to UND."

From Verl L. Clark, '41, '52
Grand Forks:

"Some of us couldn't afford to buy textbooks. The faculty at UND would have several of their required textbooks placed on file at the library, thus giving us the opportunity to check out the textbooks that we needed...when the expiration date came, we would have a friend check out the books under his name and he would let us use them. We would do the same for him.

"...Once in a while someone would dismantle his bunk and put the springs and mattress up in the cupola; he had a private room until it got freezing weather, then he would make a hasty retreat and join his peers down below.



Some girls from Davis Hall at an open house in 1937.

"The cars were swept out daily and scrubbed out weekly by members of each individual car. Our personal laundry was either sent home or done by a woman down the avenue. Her husband, a Mr. Sanden, would pick it up every week and deliver our laundered clothing on each visit. If we became ill, we would see the University doctor; if it were serious or contagious, we

would stay in the infirmary which was located in the old library.

"One year we entered a float in the Homecoming parade; our float resembled the 'Toonerville Trolley' (a comic cartoon in the Sunday paper). One year I made a Christmas card which was a Linoleum block containing a 'Toonerville Trolley' with the verse on it: *'This road is ruff, the going's tuff, but Merry Christmas sho' enuff.'*

"When our earning power increased, some of us would 'graduate' to Macnie or Budge Hall. Many of us would continue our connections with Camp Depression by eating in the Community Kitchen. We learned to get by on very little money. We would buy day-old bread from Frank's Bakery on Second Avenue for four cents a loaf, which was less than half price. We also learned it was more economical to buy groceries in larger amounts so several of us would join together and purchase our groceries from Grand Forks Grocery which was near wholesale. Cooking together made the work easier and would save time and space in the kitchen...

"Living quarters in Camp Depression didn't quite meet today's OSHA standards, but it did provide comfortable living quarters for 48 appreciative students. Even though we were crowded, we learned to get along with each other and welded a bond that lasted many years after graduation."

From Walt Styer, '41
Brooklyn Center, Minn.:

"The University saw the need for Camp Depression. It was well named for those times. I have not read of any University that had more concern for students who wished to attend college. For all those who

were residents of Camp Depression, there was no way they could attend college without the help of the University and the government programs. We all owe our University and our government a debt of gratitude...

...“I was a resident of camp for three years. In

addition to working as a janitor in several of the buildings for my stay in camp, I worked under the NYA program. I worked four years under this program. I did research work in the library for Dr. Richard Beck (professor of Scandinavian languages). I was president of Camp Depression during the years 1939 and 1940. I reported to Building and Grounds, the business office, and Miss Mabel S. Davies. We had very few problems. Everyone complied with the rules set down for good operation. Everyone worked hard, with little time for recreation.

“In my lifetime, I have never found a finer group of men than those at Camp Depression and Macnie Hall. We were like family and always ready to help each other. As students, we had a choice of taking ROTC or Physical Education. I chose ROTC as I felt I would have some choices later if we did have a war, and also for the uniforms that were provided.

“After two years of ROTC I was accepted for the advanced course. I received a commission as 2nd. Lt. Infantry upon graduation in 1941. I always thought it was a nice sight on the campus and in classes to see so many dressed in the uniform of their country. I was always glad I had chosen ROTC... When I was in Camp Depression I hoped that I could spend my last year at Macnie Hall to experience life there. This dream came true, and I enjoyed it very much. I worked at the commons for my meals. I operated the dishwashing machine.

“I had never seen so many dishes in my life. The dishes came down on the elevator, and it was my job to clean them and put them through the dishwasher. We did

not have the equipment that is available today. I did have a little more free time at Macnie, and that was appreciated...

“I am proud to be a native of North Dakota. Did you know that North Dakota paid one of the highest, if not the highest, bonus to their veterans of World War II? North Dakota is very proud of its veterans. I received an \$800 bonus for my service of four and a half years...”

*From Owen Eide, ..'41
Orinda, California*

...“N

ot enough can be said about Miss Davies, who was a guardian angel for all of us poor souls trying to get an education in spite of being broke... In a bid to emulate the fraternities and dorms, we held an open house for the ladies of Davis Hall in the spring of 1937. These venturesome girls were good sports, but Camp Depression men were not your good catch.

...“It is in getting these pictures out and going over those times that I realize the great debt I owe the men and women who were the heart of the University of North Dakota and got me started on getting a college education.”

*From Jeanette (Mrs. George C.)
Norris Wheeler, '39, '56, '62
Silver Springs, Florida:*

...“Y

ou might like to hear about two residents of Camp Depression — the brothers Joe and Francis Davis. They had lived on the top floor of Babcock, the old building across the street from the new engineering building (new in 1967, that is).

“There was a museum of stuffed animals and other things — fossils, I think — in the main part of the room and some students who could not afford rent were allowed to sleep and study up there in a walled-off area in the south end of that room.

“After Camp Depression opened those students

moved into the boxcars. As I remember it, the Davis brothers had a two-burner gas plate in the preparation room of the Biology Department and headed any lunch foods there. They went to the potato fields after the fields were picked by the harvesters and gleaned any potatoes they could find.

“Joe Davis was an assistant in the Biology Department and earned his master's there. Francis earned his master's in the Physics Department under John Hundley... At the University Joe had played clarinet in the University orchestra and continued to do so later in Washington, D.C. He died of a brain tumor. On his death, he willed his collection of spiders to the U.S. National Museum and it was mentioned as a large collection for that year in the annual report...

“I remember distinctly that Francis came in long after he had graduated and thanked George C. Wheeler for the help the brothers had received. My husband was

quite touched. He told me later that it was the first time he had been thanked.

“Since I had been an NYA student — also under Miss Mabel Davies' watchful eye — and was assigned to the Biology Department, I got to know the brothers well. Camp Depression did not seem so out of the ordinary in those days. At least half the students on the campus had to work to earn tuition and other fees. Re-used books went fast. Holes in the soles of shoes patched with cardboard were common.

“I'd save pennies and buy 10-cent store half-soles and glue them on; if I lost a lift I'd buy replacements and hammer them on too. Things had to last!! ‘Use them up; wear them out; make do or do without’ was not an idle statement.

“Those were the days, all right — and may they never return! Too many people too hungry and nowhere to turn. Maybe we have learned a little compassion.”

Who Were the Men of Camp Depression?

By Elmer Lian

It is a compliment to this diverse group of men that they turned out so well in our dangerous, tempestuous and unpredictable world.

These men stood up better than any similar or special group of men.

They did not turn to the streets, burn our Flag or protest our Country; they did not turn to drugs and whiskey and blame others; they did not join the welfare ranks and complain; they did not drape themselves with awards and decorations in march in the sun in the front of parades. They watched with compassion and disbelief as men returned from other wars; but never did they try to impose their standards or conduct on other men.

CAMP DEPRESSION RULES AND REGULATIONS

WHEREAS: Cooperation is indispensable for the comfort and well-being of the residents of Camp Depression, we the members have compiled and passed the following rules with this end in view.

1. Lights out in sleeping cars at 10:30 p.m.
2. Quiet hours in sleeping cars, 10:30 p.m. to 10 a.m., except on Fridays, Saturdays and nights before holidays, when they shall be from 12 a.m. until 12 p.m. Quiet hours in the Study Hall at all times.
3. No profanity or obscene language allowed.
4. Beds must be made immediately upon arising.
5. Each car must be swept daily and mopped once a week.
6. Drinking and the possession of alcoholic beverages prohibited on the premises.
7. Tables in the sleeping cars must be cleaned and cleared by the persons using them immediately after finishing work.
8. Smoking is prohibited in the Study Halls at all times.
9. Gambling in the Camp is prohibited.
10. Women visitors are allowed only when properly chaperoned.
11. Study Hall shall be kept clean by the Hall proctors.

CAMP DEPRESSION KITCHEN RULES

1. Each man or group of men cooking together are to clean all dishes and utensils used by them immediately upon finishing the meal.
2. Each man, or group of men, is to keep his own locker or lockers clean inside and outside.
3. The men only using the washroom facilities are to clean up after themselves.
4. The kitchen proctors shall have the following duties:
 1. Clean the sink and wash bowl
 2. Clean the stove
 3. Carry in coal and wood
 4. Build a fire at 7 a.m.
 5. Clean the shelves and tables
 6. Sweep the floor at least once a day
 7. Mop floor at least once a week
 8. Empty garbage buckets
 9. Enforce KITCHEN RULES

Goodbye My Friends

*As the curtain is slowly lowered on the stage of
each life, soon all the "boys from Camp"
will have been stilled, all the
records have been blown away in the winds.*

*As one generation after another passes by
in years to come, many will be richer,
stronger, taller and wiser.*

*But remember also many men whose names
are now unknown, who have passed
this corner of life; their lasting
footsteps can be heard if you listen carefully..*

***By Elmer Lian
Grand Forks, North Dakota***

